

Using Stories  
In the teaching of Life Lessons  
by  
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- **Introduction and suggestions for discussing *Life Lessons***

Many stories contain universal messages and offer significant personal, family, and community meanings. While stories recognize the uniqueness of each person, there is also an underlying understanding on many of them that all peoples share universal similarities. The similarities have contributed to the same story themes being found across diverse cultures. Various themes can thus be influential in teaching children of diverse backgrounds and cultural traditions because of their similar social, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. By use of the stories, a powerful tool in human understanding and even cross-cultural awareness is offered children, families, educators, and social service professionals. Stories, when coupled with story themes and processing procedures, allow for conversations beyond the story for they can be generalized to conversations related to the reality of every day experiences. *Life Skills* training can thus be offered beginning within the safe context of a story and literature experience, rather than starting with the frequent harsh reality of people's lives.

Oral and written stories can also be viewed as powerful tools for resisting the spirit of a throw away culture so often a part of industrialized societies. There is an increasing need for people to gain cross-cultural understanding in countries and in a world increasingly becoming more culturally mixed through immigration. There is also increased concern for younger generations primarily being socialized by the media and supported by relentless advertising extolling the virtues of a consumer culture. Gaining some understanding of the stories of past generations may prove to


be a cultural imperative. Families should learn to choose their stories wisely and then learn to discuss and process them. Building their own family story and evaluating it from a risk perspective can be a healing process. By exploring the themes in ones own story and choosing others important to the family or students, is the first step in this very beneficial process.

The historical explosion of children's books, stories, and illustrations in Western society correlates highly with the evolving role of childhood since the mid 1800's. Contemporary childrearing practices often require enhancement and restraint in the use of media, and parents and teachers should not neglect the healing power of the "right" story at the "right time". By emphasizing the role of the story, the setting, and including sound processing procedures, parents and educators can learn strategies ideal for processing difficult subjects, both in the home and in the classroom.

Parents and educators should also be able to discriminate quality children's literature (often cross cultural) from that of lesser value using both the story line and illustrative styles. I have often suggested the Caldecott and Newberry award books for children, not only for the quality, but also for the fact that they will continue to be published and in print. The illustrated books offer skills in the visual area and can be a viable introduction into the arts. These illustrations enhance the teaching of components of the non-verbal communication system. Social competencies may be taught all children, especially children with special needs, through the gifted abilities of children's book writers and illustrators.

By use of open-ended discussions, parents and educators can lead their families and students in learning valuable life principals based on processing the themes found in quality stories. I provide some suggestions to aid those desiring to process and discuss stories with children. Themes

from the story lines should always be chosen to fit the needs of the children being taught is related to what topics need highlighting. The goal of such discussions is not the seeking of the ‘right’ solution, but the exploration of alternatives. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers in open-ended discussions. Participants share their feelings, predict outcomes, provide information, and offer their value judgments about things being discussed. By initially using the safety of the storyline and illustrations, parents and educators can easily approach subjects often resistant for discussion by both the adult and the child. Discussion can now take place in the safe confines of the story and be slowly generalized to real world experiences. The topics can be varied. For an example, I have chosen a book most everyone is familiar with, *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, and suggest some, but not all, topics the story offers that may be helpfully processed.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Where the Wild Things Are</i></p>	
A Room of Your Own Control Issues Differences Experiencing Joy Having Fun Loneliness Making Mischief Owning Pets Passage of Time Use of Fantasy Tantrums	Anger Decision Making Escaping Happiness Inconsistencies Parental Love One's Inner Life Partings Relating to Nature One's Personal Your Name Time-out Use

- **Suggestions for the discussion process of *Life Lessons* for use with one or more children**

The performance anxiety children often feel in interactive discussions, especially with difficult subjects, requires an assurance of safety for the discussions for both adults and children. A primary means for decreasing childhood discussion anxiety is to explain there are no “right” or “wrong” answers for this activity. The parent, teacher, or discussion leader just wants to hear what the child or each child in a group has to say.

- Discussion leaders must remember questions should be at the language level the children or youth will best understand. Each question should:

1. Always be within the understanding of the child
2. Should always be interesting to the child
3. Be specific and not too abstract

Note: Asking a question on Einstein’s Law of Relativity might be specific, but of low understanding and interest to most eight year olds. Remember that questions can be used with diverse groups of children when the questions are of interest, understanding, and specific for each and all.

- Discussion leaders should set up general rules for the discussions such as:
  1. Stick to the topic
  2. You may disagree with someone’s answer, but don’t put any one down
  3. Only one person should speak at a time

4. In a group where some children dominate the discussion, the leader may wish to state they would like each person to wait until two others have said something before they say something more
5. Tell the child, children or group, if they want to ask what the adult thinks, do it at the end of the discussion. (This rule avoids the pitfall of the discussion leader's answer being perceived as the "right" one and children mimicking the leader to what they think they want.)

The discussion leader must also acknowledge each individual's contribution, but, at the same time, refrain from making value judgments about the content of what they have said. When a group leader gives too much enthusiasm for one specific answer, the participants tend to think that must be the right answer and thus model from it and imitate a similar response.

When the group leader is personally confused with an answer that has been given, ask the person to say more about it if they can. Don't rescue anyone from their own confusion, for people (especially children) must at some point learn to take responsibility for asserting themselves. Remember that children have made it an art form to give adults what they think adults want and many of them love to be rescued.

It is important to remember that silence is golden. When good questions have been asked (questions that are of interest, precise, and within everyone's knowledge), young people will be thinking about them, even if they are hesitant to answer. Silence is somewhat uncomfortable, and it is this discomfort that often brings out answers in an attempt to decrease the personal anxiety often encountered when no one is responding the

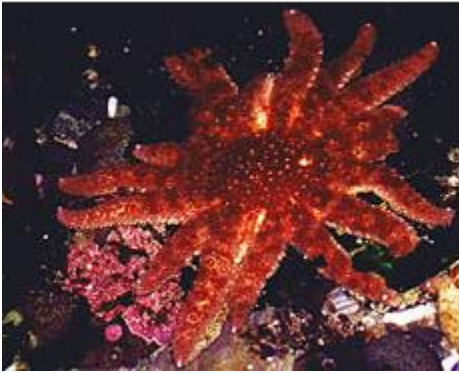
participant are sitting in silence. In general, allow time for thoughtfulness before moving on. Remember to never force an answer from any discussion participant, for they should feel safe knowing they can choose to answer or not to answer. It is the nature of good questions that draws people into discussions. In any group, the leader can have participants answer in sequence, but each should be allowed to say, “Not now” or “Pass” if they don’t want to comment at the moment.

To close a conversation, the discussion leader should simply comment of their enjoyment in hearing what others had to say. There is no need for a summary, since this often tends to be an indirect statement of critiquing what was right or wrong in the discussion by what is or isn’t included in the summary. Everyone is correct in having said something. Recall, that misinformation can be corrected at a later date, but not during the discussion session.

- **Stories and Curriculum Examples**

The examples of how to use stories as the bases for discussions is presented next. Greek and Turkish Cypriot teachers on the island of Cyprus created the materials during the authors 2000-2001 Fulbright Scholar stay. I thank them for their voluntary efforts and the materials they produced.

## **Star-fish Ocean**



Curriculum written by Turkish Cypriot Junior High School Teachers

Target Population: Upper elementary and Jr. High Students

### **Topics:**

**Stories to Motivate & Take action**

**Communication**

**Consequences**

**Care for Nature**

**Caring**

Kaan and his little daughter Selin adored walking on the shore. Rain or shine they would have a stroll for at least an hour every morning. Sometimes they sat on the sand and Kaan would read stories about the fish and other creatures that lived in the ocean. Selin loved listening to these stories while the waves hit the shore. The stories were even more meaningful and much more exciting then.



One morning when they came to the shore they saw that hundreds even thousands of star-fish had been stranded on the shore. Selin was very excited about it, but she was very concerned and sad. “ Can the star-fish live on the shore? ” she asked her father. “ Let’s throw them back into the ocean so they will ” he said.

So they did. The star-fish kept coming to shore with each tide and every morning Selin and her father would throw as many as they could back into the ocean.

One day a man that frequently jogged on the same shore came up to them and said “ I’ve been watching you for the last few days and I wondered what you were doing ”

“ We’re throwing the star-fish back into the ocean ” answered Selin.

The man laughed and said “ but there are thousands of star-fish here, what difference does it make when you can only save a few of them? ”

Kaan took a star-fish and threw it in the water and smiling he said “ it made a lot of difference for this one ”.

Rewritten by: Evgül Akbıçak

### **Topic: Stories to Motivate - Taking action**

Life Observations:

Reading plays an important role in our lives. It affects both the feelings and the behaviour of people. Reading encourages people to act as they feel since when reading we discover that other people’s feeling, desires are very similar to ours. To change things we must do something not just watch.

Questions:

1. How do you think reading stories affected Selin and her father’s life style, values and beliefs?
2. Do you think their reading stories could be the reason for Selin and her father to act the way they did?

3. Would you have done the same thing if you were in their place? Do you think they did the right thing?
4. How reasonable do you think their actions were?

Follow-up Questions:

1. Have you any ideas of what we can do about pollution, do you intend to do these things?
2. Have you read a book that has directly changed your feelings and ideas? What's the occasion?
3. Have you experienced anything that really affected you and what and how did it?

Follow-up Activity:

You are going to be a famous author. You are among to top 3 selling books. Tell us what is the name of your book and what is it about.

How do you want your book to influence the reader.

### **Topic: Communication**

Life Observations:

It is important to share feelings, thoughts and to speak to each other in a relationship. We can change things for the good if we exchange ideas. Even spending time together, enjoying the same moments forms a bond among people.

Questions:

1. We can see that there is a special bond between father and daughter. What are their own special ways of communication?
2. What did Selin say to show she was concerned about the star-fish?
3. What would you have said if it had been you who saw the star-fish washed ashore?
4. If you had seen Selin and her father putting the star-fish back into the water, would you have said anything? If you would, what would you have said?

Follow-up Questions:

1. Tell us about something that makes your relationship special with your father or mother or may be someone you love.
2. What kind of thoughts do you usually share with your friends?

### **Topic: Consequences**

Life Observations:

We should not forget that we should do the “right” thing, be careful to take the right move, in order to obtain the best result. We should do what each of us personally knows to be right. In this way individuals can feel good about their own actions no matter what others might think.

Questions:

1. Was it a good thing to put the star-fish back into the water and how did it help the star-fish?
2. What would you have done if you were the jogger?
3. What would have happened if Kaan and Selin just ignored the star-fish? (Both to Kaan and Selin and the star-fish)
4. Do you recall a certain event where you think you should have done something to change the outcome?

Follow-up Questions:

1. Have you ever done something according to someone else’s idea although you did not think it was the right move? Why? Share this event with us.
2. What might be the consequences of the following:
  - a. You failed to study for exam.
  - b. You disobeyed your parents.
  - c. You insulted a friend.
  - d. You stole from a supermarket.

### **Topic: Care for Nature**

### Life Observations:

The earth is our home and its care makes our quality of life better. Care for air, nature and living things affects each of us. Some people have found that neglect of environment can lead to increase personal stress and moves each of us from a state of living to simply surviving.

### Questions:

1. From their actions at the seashore, how can you tell that both Kaan and Selin cared about the environment?
2. How would you have reacted to the star-fish being washed ashore?
3. How do you feel about living things like animals and trees?
4. Share with us an exmple of how you helped an animal or plant in need?

### Follow-up Questions:

1. In which ways could we stop pollution and litter personally?
  - a. In our school.
  - b. In our neighbourhood.
  - c. In our country.
2. Are we part of nature and how do you feel about that?
3. Do you think you should care for yourself and others as living individuals requiring care and respect?

### **Topic: Caring**

### Life Observations:

Relationships among people are very important for human beings' psychology since noone lives alone. Everyone needs to be cared by someone. Especially while bringing up a child, the relationships in the family are very important. Parents should care for their children for their psychological and physical health since children are our future.

### Questions:

1. Which actions show that her father cared about Selin?
2. How would you react to Kaan and his daughter's actions if you were the man on the shore?

3. What do you think the man who frequently jogged on the same shore thought about Kaan and his daughter's relationship?
4. How would you behave if you were Selin's father?
5. What do you think you and your parents would have done on the shore that day?

Follow-up Questions:

1. Can you share one of your memories with us in which your father's behavior, actions showed that he really cared for you.
2. Who do you think really cares about you at school and why?
3. Do you feel your family or friends care about you and how do they show it?
4. How much do you care about your future and what do you do to prepare for it?

Follow-up Activity:

Have the class have a discussion on what the behaviours would be of a perfect friend. Is caring part of this picture and why?

# GREEK MYTHOLOGY: DAIDALOS AND IKAROS



## Summary

Daidalos, a famous architect, and his son, Ikaros, went to Crete, a Greek island, in order to build and decorate the palace of king Minoa's. When they finished their work they wanted to leave the island and go back to their home down, Athens. The King tried to convince them to stay but when they refused, he imprisoned them. Daidalos was constantly trying to find a way to escape. A bird gave him the idea to build his own wings. He took big birds' feathers and glued them on a piece of lightwood using wax. Daidalos and his son wore these wings and flew away from the island. Daidalos advised his son not to fly too high because the sun could melt the wax. Ikaros however was so excited that he flew as high as he could. Finally his father prophecy came true and the foolish boy ended up dead. The sea where he drowned was named after him, Ikario pelagos, and the nearby island Ikaria.

Target Population: Upper Elementary and Secondary Students

## Topics

1. Homesickness/nostalgia
2. Restrictions
3. Creativity
4. Impulsiveness
5. Tragedy

1. Homesickness/nostalgia

- a. How do you know that Daidalos and Ikaros felt homesick?
- b. Why do you think they felt that way?
- c. How would you feel if you were in their situation?
- d. Have you (or a member of your family) ever been abroad for a while?  
How did this make you feel?

## **2. Restrictions**

- a. Why do you think freedom was so important to Daidalos and Ikaros?
- b. How did Daidalos handle the situation?
- c. What would you have done differently if you were in this situation?
- d. How do you usually react (say or do) when you are not allowed to do the things that you want to do? (For example, your parents ask you to go to bed but you don't feel sleepy and instead you want to watch television)

## **3. Creativity**

- a. In what ways Daidalos showed his ability to be creative?
- b. Write a list of all the things that you could have built in order to escape. (e.g. a raft, a small boat, a canoe etc). Choose one and describe how you would make it. You can also sketch it.
- c. What would you do in a case where you:
  - were locked outside the house
  - missed the school bus

## **4. Impulsiveness**

- a. Why do you think Ikaros wanted to fly so high although he knew that this was a dangerous thing to do?
- b. If you were Ikaros' father how would you have spoken to him and what would you say or do?
- c. What was the last thing you have done without thinking? How did you feel afterwards?

## **5. Tragedy**

- a. What is the tragedy described in this story?
- b. How would you feel if you were Ikaro's father?
- c. Listen to the news. What is the most tragic thing you heard?  
How does this make you feel?

## **A Lesson**

**Retold by: Niyazi Alioglu**



Curriculum developed by Turkish Cypriot teachers:

Yusauf Karsili, Seval Altinok, Selma Gylem, Muemine Oezel, Nil Haktanir

Target Population: Upper Elementary or Jr. High Students

### **Topic: Honesty**

Nasreddin Hodja liked all his neighbors except for one. The neighbor he disliked was a fat woman. He disliked her because she liked to gossip and she was also dishonest. She used to borrow things from her neighbors but she never returned them.

The Hodja wanted to teach the fat woman a lesson about honesty. One day he went to her and said,

“Could I borrow your saucepan for a day or two?”

After a few days the Hodja went to the woman again. He was carrying two saucepans. One was big and the other was small.

“I’ve brought your saucepan,” said the Hodja, “but your saucepan was pregnant and gave birth to a little one. Here they are and thanks a lot.”

After a few weeks had passed, the Hodja asked for the large saucepan again. The woman gave it willingly. But days passed the Hodja did not return the saucepan. So the woman decided to go and ask for her saucepan. She walked to the Hodja’s house and said,

“Could I have my saucepan back, please?”



The Jodja looked unhappy and said,  
“I am sorry, but your saucepan died last week”  
“Stop this nonsense and give back my saucepan immediately,”  
she answered angrily.  
“I’m sorry, but your saucepan is dead,” said the Hodja.  
“But how could a saucepan die?” Asked the woman.  
“And how could a saucepan give birth? If it can give birth it can also  
die,” answered the Hodja.

### **Topic: Honesty**

Page Reference (Read to end of story before starting questions for any of the topics.)

Question 1. The Hodja didn’t like that his neighbor was dishonest so he taught her a lesson. How else might he have impressed on her the importance of honesty?

Question 2. How would you have felt having this woman for a neighbor and how would you have reacted to her?

Question 3. How does it make you feel when someone you like or even love is dishonest?

Question 4. Have you ever had to confront anyone about their dishonesty and how did you do it and how did things turn out?

### **Life Observations:**

Honesty is important in relationships because if people choose to be dishonest with their friends, teachers, or family, then the level of trust eventually goes down. Not having people trust you can create a situation where many positive opportunities in life are not made available. Being dishonest and acting in such a way can become a lifelong habit with many negative consequences.

### **Follow-up Questions:**

What might happen if you told a lie to your friends, teachers, or parents?  
How would you feel if one of your friends told lies about you and what would you do about it?

What would you do if a friend told you something and you knew it was a lie?

How do you feel about people who believe their own lies?

How do you feel about students who are not honest on the school studies and in school tests they take?

How do you feel about a brother or sister who borrows things from you and doesn't always return them? What do you try to do to resolve such a situation?

Follow-up Activity: Place a small amount of money in an envelope with someone's *(Any class activity which would enhance the students understanding of the topic and would be motivating to the students to participate in.)*

# **A Mother for Koko by Keiko Kasza**

**Retold by Maria Ioannou**



**Curriculum developed by Greek Cypriot teacher: Maria Ioannou, Constantinou Karatzjia, and Eleni Angelides**

Target Population: Elementary Age Students with possible adaptation for higher grades.

## **TOPICS**

- 1. Loneliness**
- 2. Rejection**
- 3. Being part of a family**
- 4. Sorrow/Sadness**
- 5. Being different /Accepting others**
- 6. Adoption**

Summary: Koko is a small bird that lives all alone and he is looking for a mother. He goes to several animals and asks them to be his mom but all of them refused with the excuse that they do not look like him. Finally Koko finds a bear that is more than willing to love and take good care of him although there isn't any similarity between her and the bird. Finally Koko goes to bear's house where he discovers that the bear has already adopted three other animals, a pig, a hippopotamus, and a crocodile. Koko is very happy now because he has a family.

## **Topic 1. LONELINESS**

### **Questions**

- a. How do you know that Koko felt lonely?
- b. How would you feel if you were Koko in this situation?

- c. Have you ever stayed alone in the house or gotten lost in a park or a supermarket? How would you feel or react in a situation?

## OBSERVATIONS

Friendships and family support helps people in daily life and especially at times of change or difficulty. Children, especially during the growing years, experience perhaps as many life changes as at any time in their lives. Being loved by another person is vital for all human beings and family support, especially if the family is healthy, is critical in developing and then supporting the values, attitudes and behaviors which will allow people to function well within their social environments.

### Follow-up Questions

1. How do you feel about being part of a family and what kind of family are you going to have when you grow up?
2. Do you feel like you are part of a school family in your classroom and why are why not?
3. In what ways does your family and relatives support you?
4. How can the support of your family and relatives be important later in life?
5. How does your family support your efforts at school?
6. How might you like your family to be different and why?
7. If you had three wishes for your family, what wishes might they be?

### Follow-up Activity:

Draw a picture of Koko after no one wanted to be his mother and another picture of him after the Mother Bear adopted him.

## Topic 2. REJECTION

### Questions

- a. How do you think Koko felt when everyone he met refused to be his mother?
- b. If you were Koko in this situation how would you feel and what would you say (or do) to the animals that didn't want to adopt you?
- c. Did you ever find yourself in a situation where:

- a classmate made fun of you
  - a teacher said offensive things to you
  - your parents punished you for something you didn't do
- and how did you usually react in such situations?
- d. How do you treat other children who would like your help?

## OBSERVATIONS

Being socially rejected can be difficult at any time in a person's life. Friends, family, classmates, teachers, employers, etc sometimes reject people socially. even when others may not mean to. Life circumstances are sometimes difficult, and individuals may feel they have no choice not to help another because of the business of their own life. Compassion is a marvelous trait to have and people should attempt to be as kind to others as they can. If people can't help someone, they might at least attempt to find someone else who could be of service. Be careful not to reject people, for we wouldn't want to be rejected ourselves, and but for grace, we might be in the other person's shoes.

### Follow-up Questions

1. How do you feel when others reject you?
2. Why do you think people might reject others?
3. What can we do when people reject us?
4. How should we try to act toward others and what might be the benefits of being kind to other people?
5. How do you feel if you get a bad mark at school, which is like a rejection for your efforts?
6. How do you feel a new student in your class might feel if everyone ignores them and how could you help that student?
7. How do you think your teacher would feel if students ignore the work that has been assigned or aren't attentive in class?

## Topic 3. BEING PART OF A FAMILY

### Questions

- a. Why do you think Koko needed a family?
- b. How did Koko handle the situation?

- c. If you were Koko what would you have done differently in order to find a family?
- d. Why do you need a family?  
Make a list:
  - of all the things that your family does for you
  - of all the things that you would like your family to do for you

## OBSERVATIONS

Family life in whatever social form it takes, is very critical for the human family. Infants would not survive without support and care for an extended period of time. Studies have shown that infants not touched and given human attention don't thrive as well as those who receive these things. Family life can be most rewarding thing in life or it can be very stressful. How parents and children interact makes all the difference to families. Every member of the family should feel loved and wanted and the home should be a safe haven away from the cares of the world. Families that have harmony in the home appear to produce many long lasting rewards for everyone involved. Families have the greatest influence on a person in the early years of their life and that is why these years are so important.

## Follow-up Questions

1. What kind of fun things can a family do together?
2. What kind of fun things are you going to have your families do when you grow up and have your own family?
3. Why do you think it is important to feel loved within one's family?
4. How do you think children might act towards grandparents and other relatives?
5. When you think children should be independent from their family to make decisions for themselves?

## Topic 4. SORROW/SADNESS

### Questions

- a. Why did Koko feel so unhappy?
- b. How would you feel if you were Koko in this situation?
- c. When was the last time you felt unhappy?

d. In what ways do you usually express that you are really sad?

## OBSERVATIONS

There are times in life when people are sad or experience great sorrow. Reactions to great loss in such a way are a normal human condition. People would feel it odd if someone wasn't sad at the loss of a loved one. As children, individuals sometimes learn about these things when a friend moved away or when a pet dies. Some things that happen to people in life just happen and there is little they can do about it. Other things people may have more control over, such as doing well on a test or on a job. If people are well prepared for these type of school or work experiences they can have some influence on preventing punishing things from happening. Some people have hormonal or chemical things that happen in their bodies that make them feel depressed or sad, sometimes for long periods of time. Sometimes people even need professional help to get over long periods of sadness (Depression). People who help others are often called social workers, psychologists, or psychiatrists.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Do you know anyone who has had long periods of sadness and how did they get over it?
2. Have you ever had long periods of sadness and how did you get over it?
3. What is the kind of things that might make you sad at school?
4. What are the kinds of things that make you sad about your friends?

## Topic 5. BEING DIFFERENT /ACCEPTING OTHERS

Questions

- a. Why do you think all animals but bear refused to be Koko's mother?
- b. What would you say or do if you were one of those animals and Koko asked you to be his mother?
- c. What are some of the differences between you and your classmates?
- d. How would you react if one of your new classmates is handicapped, or black or a child from another country who does not speak your language? (Talk to them, ignore them, play with them, make fun of them etc)

## OBSERVATIONS

Very often the word "different" has a negative connotation. Some people when hearing that someone is different than himself or herself automatically believe something negative about that person. Some people even have negative, irrational and inflexible attitudes toward an entire category of people and they often use these beliefs to justify or explain unequal treatment of those people. Being different does not necessarily means being inferior or superior to others. It is true that there are many differences among people in terms of language, culture, religion, race, color etc. as well as many interpersonal differences in terms of abilities and personalities. It is also true though that there are many similarities among people. After all we are human. People all over the world cry when a loved one dies, laugh or smile when something good happens and have many of the same needs (food, water, love, affection etc). Instead of concentrating on what separates us we should concentrate on what bring us together. If we are willing to let go of our stereotypes and get to know other people and judge them for what they really are, we may find more peaceful alternatives to conflict.

1. Which of your family members is most different from you and why? What do you or don't you like about them?
2. Which of your friends is most different from you and why? What do you or don't you like about them?
3. In what ways are you different from your family members or friends and what kind of reactions do you get for your personal differences.
4. How do you treat other students who are different from you and how do you think that would like to be treated?
5. Of all the people on the earth, what group or nationality do you think is most different from you and why?
6. Of all the people on the earth, what group or nationality do you think is most like you and why?

## Topic 6. ADOPTION

### *Questions*

- a. Why do you think mama bear adopted Koko?
- b. What do you think it would happen if she had refused to do so?
- c. Do you know someone:
  - who is adopted



- who lost his/her mother or father
- who is in foster care
- who lives in an orphanage

## OBSERVATIONS

The process of adopting a child is very often a very complex and in most cases a time consuming procedure. It is indeed one of the most complicated social issues due to the large number of factors involved, namely social, psychological, personal, biological etc. Usually the decision of a couple to adopt a child comes after many years of unfruitful attempts to have a child of their own. How successful this effort is going to be depends on many factors. Sometimes the insecurities or fears of the adopting parents, the problems and special needs of some adoptive children, the negative reactions of other people, like relatives, may make the situation even more difficult. Nevertheless, it should be noted that adopting a child is unequivocally better rather than raising a child in an institution. William Goldfarb, for example, compared forty children who had been placed in foster homes soon after birth with forty children who had spend the first two years of life in institutions. He found that the institutionalized children suffered a number of personality defects that persisted even after they had left the institution.

### Follow-up Questions:

1. Do you know anyone who was adopted and how do they feel about it?
2. If you were not a member of your family, would you want them to adopt you and why?
3. Why do you think so many immigrants would like to be “adopted” into other countries?
4. Are illegal immigrants a problem in Cyprus or your country and why?